

Rosa Ponselle

the
1939
Victor
and 1954
'Villa Pace'
recordings





A "NEW ORTHOPHONIC" HIGH FIDELITY RECORDING

RCA VICTOR
LM-1889
RED SEAL



**Rosa
Ponselle
Sings
Today**

CD I (77:00)

The 1939 Victor Recordings

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---|------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | Si tu voulais (Tosti) <i>Fr.</i>
31 x 1939; PBS 042206-5 (Victor 2053 B) | 2:51 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | À l'aimé (de Fontenailles) <i>Fr.</i>
31 x 1939; PBS 042207-5 (Victor 2053 A) | 3:48 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | The Nightingale and the Rose (Rimsky-Korsakov) <i>Eng.</i>
31 x 1939; PBS 042208-3 (Victor 16451 A) | 3:49 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | When I Have Sung My Songs (Charles) <i>Eng.</i>
31 x 1939; PBS 042209-1 (VA 68) | 2:02 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | When I Have Sung My Songs (Charles) <i>Eng.</i>
31 x 1939; PBS 042209-3 (unpublished) | 2:16 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 | Ave Maria (Schubert) <i>Lat.</i>
with Mischa Schmidt, <i>violinist</i>
1 xi 1939; PCS 042212-5 (VA 67) | 5:11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7 | On Wings of Dream (Arensky) <i>Eng.</i>
with Mischa Schmidt, <i>violinist</i>
1 xi 1939; PCS 042213-5 (16451 B) | 3:39 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8 | Ave Maria (Schubert) <i>Lat.</i>
7 xi 1939; PCS 042212-10 (unpublished) | 5:07 |

The 1954 'Villa Pace' Recordings

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| 9 | Plaisir d'amour (Martini) <i>Fr.</i>
17 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (RCA Victor LM 2047) | 3:58 |
| 10 | Jeune fillette (18th-century bergerette; arr. by J. B. Weckerlin) <i>Fr.</i>
17 x 1954; E4-RC-0703-I (RCA Victor LM 2047) | 1:38 |
| 11 | Beau soir (Debussy) <i>Fr.</i>
17 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (RCA Victor LM 2047) | 2:32 |
| 12 | Bonjour, Suzon (Delibes) <i>Fr.</i>
17 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (RCA Victor LM 2047) | 2:46 |
| 13 | La chevelure (Debussy) <i>Fr.</i>
17 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (RCA Victor LM 2047) | 3:32 |
| 14 | Carmen—Carmela (arr. by Gertrude Ross) <i>Sp.</i>
21 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (RCA Victor LM 2047) | 2:21 |
| 15 | El Mirar de la Maja (Granados) <i>Sp.</i>
18 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (RCA Victor LM 2047) | 3:19 |
| 16 | La partida (Alvarez) <i>Sp.</i>
17 x 1954; E4-RC-0713-I (RCA Victor LM 2047) | 4:09 |
| 17 | LA MOLINARA: Nel cor più non mi sento (Paisello) <i>It.</i>
18 x 1954; E4-RC-0721-I (RCA Victor LM 2047) | 1:50 |
| 18 | Star vicino (attr. Rosa) <i>It.</i>
19 x 1954; E4-RC-0715-I (RCA Victor LM 2047) | 1:45 |

- [19] 'A Vucchella (Tosti) *It.*
18 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (RCA Victor LM 2047) 1:59
- [20] Ideale (Tosti) *It.*
18 x 1954; E4-RC-0709-1 (RCA Victor LM 2047) 3:43
- [21] Marechiare (Tosti) *It.*
18 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (RCA Victor LM 2047) 2:55
- [22] Fa la nana, bambin (Geni Sadero) *It.*
18 x 1954; E4-RC-0708-2 (RCA Victor LM 2047) 2:43
- [23] Dicitencello vuje (Falvo) *It.*
21 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (RCA Victor LM 2047) 3:19
- [24] Could I (Tosti) *It.*
21 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (RCA Victor LM 2047) 4:58

CD 2 (65:43)

- [1] AMADIS: Bois épais (Lully) *Fr.*
16 x 1954; E4-RC-0701-2 (RCA Victor LM 1889) 3:13
- [2] Rosemonde (Mario Persico) *Fr.*
17 x 1954; E4-RC-0704-1 (RCA Victor LM 1889) 3:26
- [3] Guitares et mandolines (Saint-Saëns) *Fr.*
20 x 1954; E4-RC-0726-1 (RCA Victor LM 1889) 1:31
- [4] Le temps des Lilas from *Poem de l'amour et de la mer* (Chausson) *Fr.*
17 x 1954; E4-RC-0705-1 (RCA Victor LM 1889) 4:53

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| <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | Von ewiger Liebe, op. 43 no. I (Brahms) <i>Ger.</i>
18 x 1954; E4-RC-0711-1 (RCA Victor LM 1889) | 5:06 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 | Mir träumte von einem Königskind, op. 4 no. 5 (Richard Trunk) <i>Ger.</i>
18 x 1954; E4-RC-0712-1 (RCA Victor LM 1889) | 3:07 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7 | Erlkönig, op. I (Schubert) <i>Ger.</i>
19 x 1954; E4-RC-0715-1 (RCA Victor LM 1889) | 3:59 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8 | In questa tomba oscura (Beethoven) <i>It.</i>
17 x 1954; E4-RC-0702-1 (RCA Victor LM 1889) | 3:20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9 | Rispetto (Wolf-Ferrari) <i>It.</i>
20 x 1954; E4-RC-0724-2 (RCA Victor LM 1889) | 1:05 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10 | O del mio amato ben (Donaudy) <i>It.</i>
19 x 1954; E4-RC-0714-2 (RCA Victor LM 1889) | 4:28 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11 | Aprile (Tosti) <i>It.</i>
18 x 1954; E4-RC-0710-1 (RCA Victor LM 1889) | 2:53 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 12 | Amuri, amuri (Geni Sadero) <i>It.</i>
17 x 1954; E4-RC-0707-1 (RCA Victor LM 1889) | 4:16 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 13 | I battitori di grano (Geni Sadero) <i>It.</i>
17 x 1954; E4-RC-0706-1 (RCA Victor LM 1889) | 1:12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 14 | Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes (trad.) <i>Eng.</i>
19 x 1954; E4-RC-0719-1 (RCA Victor LM 1889) | 2:56 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15 | The Night Wind (Roland Farley) <i>Eng.</i>
19 x 1954; E4-RC-0720-2 (RCA Victor LM 1889) | 1:36 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16 | Homing (Teresa del Riego) <i>Eng.</i>
19 x 1954; E4-RC-0718-2 (RCA Victor LM 1889) | 2:33 |

Interview with Ruby Mercer

17	Introduction and announcement of Lully's <i>Bois épais</i>	1:22
18	Comments on Persico's <i>Rosemonde</i>	:52
19	Comments on Saint-Saëns's <i>Guitares et mandolines</i>	:53
20	Comments on Brahms's <i>Von ewiger Liebe</i>	1:07
21	Comments on Trunk's <i>Mir träumte von einem Königskind</i>	:42
22	Comments on Schubert's <i>Erlkönig</i>	1:40
23	Comments on Beethoven's <i>In questa tomba oscura</i>	1:02
24	Comments on Wolf-Ferrari's <i>Rispetto</i>	:30
25	Comments on Donaudy's <i>O del mio amato ben</i>	:51
26	Comments on Tosti's <i>Aprile</i>	1:04
27	Comments on Sadero's <i>Amuri, amuri</i>	:47
28	Comments on Sadero's <i>I battitori di grano</i>	:31
29	Comments on <i>Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes</i>	:57
30	Comments on Farley's <i>The Night Wind</i>	:49
31	Comments on del Riego's <i>Homing</i> and concluding remarks	1:49

CD 3 (74:01)

1	LE NOZZE DI FIGARO: <i>Voi che sapete</i> (Mozart) It. 21 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (unpublished by RCA Victor)	2:44
2	Tre giorni son che Nina (Ciampi; formerly attributed to Pergolesi) It. 19 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (unpublished by RCA Victor)	2:33

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| [3] | An die Musik, op.88 no.4 (Schubert) <i>Ger.</i>
20 x 1954; E4-RC-0723-1 (unpublished by RCA Victor) | 3:00 |
| [4] | Der Tod und das Mädchen, op.7 no.3 (Schubert) <i>Ger.</i>
18 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (unpublished by RCA Victor) | 2:49 |
| [5] | Träume, No.5 from <i>Wesendonck Lieder</i> (Wagner) <i>Ger.</i>
19 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (unpublished by RCA Victor) | 5:01 |
| [6] | Morgen!, op.27 no.4 (Richard Strauss) <i>Ger.</i>
19 x 1954; E4-RC-0717-1 (unpublished by RCA Victor) | 3:59 |
| [7] | Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt, op.6 no.6 (Tchaikovsky) <i>Ger.</i>
16 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (unpublished by RCA Victor) | 3:20 |
| [8] | L'invitation au voyage (Duparc) <i>Fr.</i>
17 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (unpublished by RCA Victor) | 4:23 |
| [9] | Psyché (Paladilhe) <i>Fr.</i>
21 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (unpublished by RCA Victor) | 3:09 |
| [10] | Tristesse éternelle (Chopin; arranged by Litvinne) <i>Fr.</i>
21 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (unpublished by RCA Victor) | 3:22 |
| [11] | Asturiana, No.3 from <i>Seven Popular Spanish Songs</i> (De Falla) <i>Sp.</i>
18 x 1954; E4-RC-0727-2 (unpublished by RCA Victor) | 2:56 |
| [12] | Nana, No.5 from <i>Seven Popular Spanish Songs</i> (De Falla) <i>Sp.</i>
18 x 1954; E4-RC-0728-1 (unpublished by RCA Victor) | 1:43 |
| [13] | My Lovely Celia (Munro) <i>Eng.</i>
19 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (unpublished by RCA Victor) | 2:21 |
| [14] | In the Luxembourg Gardens (Lockhart – Manning) <i>Eng.</i>
19 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (unpublished by RCA Victor) | 2:15 |

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| [15] | Agnus Dei (Bizet) <i>Lat.</i> | 3:II |
| | 20 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (unpublished by RCA Victor) | |
| [16] | Ave Maria (Luzzi) <i>Lat.</i> | 4:18 |
| | 20 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (unpublished by RCA Victor) | |
| [17] | Ave Maria (Millard) <i>Lat.</i> | 5:54 |
| | 20 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (unpublished by RCA Victor) | |
| [18] | Ave Maria (Sandoval) <i>It.</i> | 4:29 |
| | 20 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (unpublished by RCA Victor) | |
| [19] | Ave Maria (Tosti) <i>It.</i> | 3:38 |
| | 20 x 1954; E4-RC-0722-1 (unpublished by RCA Victor) | |
| [20] | Se (Denza) <i>It.</i> | 4:28 |
| | 18 x 1954; no matrix number assigned (unpublished by RCA Victor) | |
| [21] | Colombetta (Buzzi-Peccia) <i>It.</i> | 3:30 |
| | 17 x 1954; E4-RC-0725-1 (unpublished by RCA Victor) | |

CD 1: tracks 1 - 8 with Romano Romani, pianist; tracks 9 - 20 & 24 with Igor Chichagov, pianist; tracks 21 - 23 with Rosa Ponselle, pianist

CD 2: tracks 1 - 11 & 13 - 16 with Igor Chichagov, pianist; track 12 with Rosa Ponselle, pianist

CD 3: tracks 1 - 14 & 19 - 21 with Igor Chichagov, pianist; tracks 15 - 18 with Igor Chichagov, organist

Producer: Ward Marston

Transfers and audio restoration by Ward Marston

Typesetting and booklet design by Louise Rice

ROMOPHONE is extremely grateful to Elayne Duke and the Rosa Ponselle Foundation for their kind permission to reissue the complete 1954 'Villa Pace' recordings. We would also like to thank the Library of Congress, Peter Lack, Leigh Martinet, Bill Park and David Terry for their assistance.

Rosa Ponselle's 1939 Victor and 1954 'Villa Pace' recordings

Romophone's third volume of Rosa Ponselle's recordings includes her last 78 rpm discs, with two alternative takes, made in Hollywood in 1939. The recording session was held in a small studio with extremely close microphone placement. Every effort has been made to minimise the boxy character of these recordings, but no extreme measures (i.e. artificial reverberation) have been employed.

Rosa Ponselle's sudden retirement from the operatic stage and concert platform came as a surprise to her faithful public, and no one dreamed that she would ever again make recordings. In fact, during the 1940s, she gave no public performances. Late in 1949, however, a friend brought a tape recorder to 'Villa Pace', Ponselle's home outside Baltimore, Maryland, and persuaded her to make a recording. Her interest in singing was rekindled, and she became fascinated by the new technology of magnetic tape recording.

Over the next five years, Rosa Ponselle made a prolific number of private recordings at 'Villa Pace', most of which have been preserved. Some of these were issued on a private subscription LP disc to benefit the Baltimore Civic Opera Company. Ponselle also made a number of public appearances in Baltimore singing for charity events. Notable among these was her appearance at the Republican National Convention in 1952.

News that Rosa Ponselle was singing again reached RCA Victor, and in October 1954 a recording crew was dispatched to 'Villa Pace' to make professional recordings which were to be issued commercially. More than 50 titles were recorded over a five-day period. These recordings were subsequently transferred to acetate discs which were sent to 'Villa Pace' for Ponselle's approval. Sixteen selections were chosen and issued on RCA Victor LM 1889 as 'Rosa Ponselle Sings Today'. In conjunction with the release of this record, a short promotional interview with Ponselle was recorded and distributed to radio stations across the United States. In 1957, an additional sixteen selections were chosen from the 1954 sessions and issued on RCA Victor LM 2047, 'Rosa Ponselle in Song'. Both albums are reissued here as originally presented by RCA, together with the promotional interview.



Rosa Ponselle in her library at 'Villa Pace'

By 1960, it was clear that RCA had no further interest in the remaining Ponselle material, and all the original tapes extant in the RCA vault were returned to Ponselle for her own use. She subsequently gave the unissued selections to Edward J. Smith who issued them on his own ASCO and EJS record labels.

The master tapes for the two RCA albums were given by Rosa Ponselle to the Library of Congress which provided copies of these tapes for this CD reissue. Unfortunately, the master tapes for the remaining titles have disappeared. Furthermore, the reference acetate discs sent by RCA to Ponselle have also vanished. Tape copies of these acetates were made prior to their disappearance, however, and it is this third-generation source which I have used for the material contained on the third CD. Since the original tapes could not be used, the sonic quality of these selections is therefore inferior to the 'Villa Pace' material contained on the first and second CDs.

Ward Marston

Rosa Ponselle and Enrico Caruso in Halévy's *'La Juive'* in 1920



Rosa Ponselle's place in the history of singing is assured. Geraldine Farrar once said: 'When discussing singers, there are two you must first set aside – Caruso and Ponselle. Then you may begin.' Many years later, Maria Callas remarked that 'Rosa Ponselle was the greatest singer of us all.' And Luciano Pavarotti has written: 'Rosa Ponselle, almost more than any other singer, had the unique combination of voice and musical profundity to advance operatic interpretation by decades, simply by the sheer genius of her artistry... Whenever young singers approach me and ask whom they should pattern their singing after, I always respond: "Make a sincere study of the recordings of Rosa Ponselle." To every young singer in any age – ours or some distant one – this will always be excellent advice. Rosa Ponselle is the Queen of Queens in all of singing.'

For nineteen years Ponselle was the leading soprano at the Metropolitan Opera. She sang

three seasons at Covent Garden and inaugurated the premier season of the Maggio Musicale in Florence with *La Vestale*, honouring a promise made to her dying mother that she would one day sing in Italy. Other than these engagements, she refused to sing outside the

United States; she had heard too many unpleasant stories from her colleagues about harsh critics and audiences abroad.

During an 80th birthday interview, a television interviewer asked her about singing high notes. Ponselle replied somewhat humorously: 'Well, I just hoped to get it.' This response provides an insight into her approach. With her secure technique and breath control, she simply sang her



Rosa Ponselle

high notes, expecting them to come out as they should while communicating fully the emotional content of the words. And they always did – except for one performance of *Aida* in Brooklyn. After agreeing to sing while recuperating from influenza, she could not sustain one of the high notes for as long as she

normally could. No one in the audience, except her secretary, noticed it. Ponselle, however, was unhappy, and from then on she would sing *Aida* on tour with the Metropolitan but never again in New York.

Ponselle's final performance with the Metropolitan Opera was a tour broadcast of *Carmen* in Cleveland in April 1937. The year before, during another Metropolitan Opera tour in Baltimore, she met Carle Jackson, the polo-playing son of the city's mayor, at a party given by Lucrezia Bori. Ponselle was 39 when they married on 13 December 1936. He was ten years younger and had a 9-year-old son from a previous marriage. Once Jackson had moved into her huge New York penthouse, he told Ponselle that her mother, sister, former piano teacher, secretary, agent, brother and his wife would all have to move out. Unhappily she advised them all of her husband's wishes and eventually bought each of them a house or apartment. These people, so dear to her, had lived with

her throughout her career, and had accompanied her, along with other invited guests, to Europe every summer.

Soon after her final Metropolitan performance, Ponselle and her husband moved to Hollywood. Throughout her career

Hollywood had been a place where she had many friends and could relax. Joan Crawford, Irene Dunne and Gloria Swanson all studied singing, and would often visit the soprano at her home to listen to her sing and receive helpful advice. Ponselle also played tennis, golf, attended horse races and swam almost every day.

In 1939, still in Hollywood, Ponselle recorded some songs for RCA Victor with Romano



Ponselle as Carmen

Romani, her long-time friend and coach-accompanist. Following the success of these records, RCA Victor offered her a new recording contract and NBC proposed a series of high-paying radio appearances, both of which she declined. In fact, Ponselle's popularity was so immense that the moguls of

Paramount Pictures and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer were keen to involve her in films. George Cukor wanted to direct her in films, and Louis B. Mayer and Irving Thalberg sent her a film script of *Carmen* in which the rôle of Don José was completely left out! The apparent lack of artistic quality in the motion picture industry made her wary, and she decided on a fee she knew would not be accepted. When the amount was relayed to Mayer, he paused, and then asked: 'Where did Miss Ponselle get this figure? By adding up all the numbers in the Los Angeles telephone book?'

Returning to Baltimore in 1940, she designed and built a Mediterranean-style house which she named 'Villa Pace'. The sprawling villa, built in the shape of a cross to ensure fresh air and ventilation, sat on a 300-foot hill which she had built on 80 acres of land in the Greenspring Valley, north of Baltimore. During her retirement many of Ponselle's family and friends visited her at 'Villa Pace',

but these years found her becoming increasingly estranged from her husband. Carle Jackson was not interested in music or in her singing. Lonely in the evenings during her husband's all-night poker games, she would go into the music room and sing, accompanying herself at the piano. Often, to the embarrassment of their guests, he would ask her to stop. In February 1951 they were divorced. Ponselle never remarried, but her husband continued to marry wealthy women.

Ponselle was one of the first women in America to undergo electric shock treatment for depression. While recuperating from her illness, she began to work with a small opera group which, under her artistic



Ponselle with Joan Crawford

leadership, became the Baltimore Opera. Also, she would frequently attend plays and concerts by visiting artists on tour in Baltimore and Washington. (Following a concert of Arturo Toscanini, the legendary conductor fell to his knees when Ponselle approached him. He had frequently asked her to sing with him, but she

refused, feeling that Toscanini's conception of the operas he conducted would be inconsistent with her own.) At Christmas she always decorated 'Villa Pace' lavishly, and for two weeks each year she would open its doors to the public during the afternoons in order to raise money for the Baltimore Symphony.

In 1952 word was out that Ponselle was singing again. There had been a political rally in Baltimore for Dwight Eisenhower, and John Charles Thomas had been asked to sing until 'Ike' made his appearance. Thomas knew that Ponselle was in the audience, and with the crowd's help he persuaded her to come to the microphone. Several minutes of deafening applause accompanied her to the stage. The singers agreed to do a popular duet, then Ponselle sang Schubert's *Ave Maria*, one of Eisenhower's favourites. She didn't know that her voice was being broadcast through loudspeakers outside, nor that it was being recorded. As Eisenhower was arriving in his

car, he said to his wife Mamie: 'That's Rosa! I'd know her voice anywhere.' Once Eisenhower was inside the auditorium, Ponselle brought him to the stage with 'Some Enchanted Evening' from *South Pacific*. When she came to the end of the song, she changed Oscar Hammerstein II's lyrics to 'Now we have found him...never let him go!'

A recording of this event found its way to New York, and Ponselle soon received recording offers from both RCA Victor and Capitol Records. As Victor had been her artistic 'home', she offered RCA the rights to release her first recordings in fifteen years. However, not wanting to travel to New York to record, she stipulated that they come to



Swanson, Swartout, Moore and Ponselle

her. They were to stay for a few weeks, and she would sing when she felt like it. She knew that if her mezza-voce and high pianissimo were 'there, in the voice', she would be 'in top form and could sing anything'. If they were not, she would not sing that day.

In October 1954, with negotiations

completed, RCA Victor sent its equipment, chief engineer and his staff down to 'Villa Pace'. During the first session the equipment failed: her voice was simply too large. The equipment used to record the Philadelphia Orchestra was brought in, and it proved ideal. Ponselle chose Igor Chichagov, a young Russian whom she had engaged as accompanist in her private vocal studio, as her pianist. If her voice was 'there', the recording sessions would begin early in the afternoon.

Chichagov recalled that the piano was placed at the foot of some steps leading into the music room. Ponselle stood to his left in the large 26-foot-high vaulted entrance foyer, looking through the library to a large glass conservatory. In the dining room, to her left, the engineers sat with their recording equipment positioned on the heavy antique dining table. Ponselle would usually record three or four songs during a session. Except for a few hums and the high pianissimo 'oo' vowel in her morning shower,

there was no need for Ponselle to vocalize; her voice did not need warming up. Chichagov described the recording set-up as 'difficult' because he could not actually see Ponselle. Furthermore, because of her spontaneous feeling for the words and her changing emotions, she never sang a song exactly the same way twice. Being instinctively musical, nothing was ever 'set': another reason why her singing always remained fresh and alive.

Two long-playing records resulted from these sessions. When '*Rosa Ponselle Sings Today*' was released in early 1955 Aida Favia-Artsay wrote: 'That Ponselle should have agreed to emerge from her self-imposed retirement and to



Galli-Curci and Ponselle in 1936

record again for RCA Victor is a surprise and a very heartwarming one, but that she should make her comeback with the freshness of voice she had at the zenith of her career – that is staggering!'

According to Chichagov, whenever Ponselle was coaching an artist engaged to sing

with her at Baltimore Opera or an artist sent down at the request of the Metropolitan Opera to work with her, she would so completely become the character she was coaching – whether it were Aida, Leonora, Maddalena, Norma, Santuzza or Violetta – that she herself would disappear. The character would spring to life, bringing a fantastic and eerie feeling into the studio. The film actress and opera fan Gloria Swanson wrote in her 1980 autobiography that Rosa Ponselle was the greatest actress she had ever seen on the operatic stage.

Towards the end of her career, Ponselle told a reporter for a New Orleans newspaper: 'Great voices are nature's gift, but so are flowers. A beautiful, well-kept garden is the result of toil and constant care. A singer is great only after she has developed her gift to the highest degree possible.' Having heard Ponselle in *La Traviata*, Lotte Lehmann asked her friend Geraldine Farrar: 'How does one get a voice like Ponselle's?' Farrar replied: 'There's only one way: by a very special

arrangement with God – and then one must work very, very hard!'

Rosa Ponselle died at 'Villa Pace' on Memorial Day (25 May) 1981. She was laid to rest in a white marble mausoleum in the Druid Cemetery next to her sister Carmela and near Romano Romani, her beloved friend and coach-conductor-accompanist. On her 75th birthday, Harold C. Schonberg had written in *The New York Times*: 'There Was Nothing Like The Ponselle Sound, Ever. To many of us, it is the greatest single voice in any category. She had the low notes of a contralto and a knockout high C; and there were no artificial registers to the voice. It went from bottom to top in the smoothest, most seamless of scales, with no shifting from chest to head. That trill, which no singer today is able to come near matching!, the emotionalism of her singing, combined with good taste, the power when she let loose, the delicacy of her pianissimos, the flexibility in coloratura work, the effortless production, the handsome figure on stage – the good fairy was very kind to Rosa Ponselle!'

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RCA VICTOR
LM-2047
RED SEAL



A "New Orthophonic" High Fidelity Recording

ROSA **PONSELLE** *in* **SONG**



